

forced temporarily to banish Sir John, and to confiscate his goods.¹ The incident, like the torture of the friar in the year before, shows the uncivilised manners of the Court, the violent passions which the young men of the time affected, and the total abeyance of ordinary law in cases where great men had interest. All these evils were directly connected with the practice of keeping retainers. The military spirit which is still so disastrous to the nations of the Continent, at that time existed among the English nobles in the worst possible form. It was not even the national army whose * honour' each wished to defend at the expense of justice, but the * honour * of the little army attached to his own household and wearing his own badge. It was difficult for a man of position to avoid having such a force, for on it his social and political status depended. If the Earl of Stafford had not had retainers, he would not have been able to use high language to the King, and his son's death would have gone unrevenged.

Saddened by this tragedy, the army moved on towards Scotland. They crossed the Border at Berwick and began to ravage the country. The Scotch were aided by a few hundred French men-at-arms under some officers of experience, but it would have been madness to give battle to the whole force of England, which had on this occasion been brought against them. The English advanced up the Tweed valley, destroying as they went, until they came to the famous Abbey of Melrose. The * halidome,' as its estates were called, had hitherto been spared by the moss-troopers who rode the Border districts. But the royal army signalised the importance of the occasion by reducing the abbey to a ruin. Turning North, they arrived, in a few days, at Edinburgh, which they destroyed, as they had destroyed everything on the road. The castle alone held out. Meanwhile the Scotch army, unable to hinder the progress of this overwhelming force, had made a bold dash for England. There are two routes between the kingdoms, roughly corresponding to the modern railway lines by Berwick and Carlisle respectively. One is the plain between the east end of the Cheviots and the sea, a flat and fertile country, by which the great English army had marched.

¹ Froiss., iii. chap. 13 ; Wals., u. 129-30.